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Dear Members of the Michigan House Insurance Committee:

I understand that you are considering legislation that could remove insurance coverage for abortion. I urge you to please consider my personal story as you research the possible implications of such a policy.

I have always been aware that many women choose to end pregnancies for a variety of reasons. At the same time, I never thought I would have to make such a choice.

In my seventh year of marriage, I planned my first pregnancy, and had a wonderful, healthy labor – and baby – when my oldest daughter, Sylvia, was born. When Sylvia was five, my husband and I decided to have another baby, and I got pregnant right away. Since I'd been blessed with a smooth pregnancy before, and since my daughter was excited about my growing belly, we brought her to our eighteen-week ultrasound appointment. There, we learned the sex of our baby – a boy! – and watched him move around. Sylvia had named him "Blobbie," since on his earlier ultrasound pictures he looked like a blob, and we started to get excited about her little brother and our son.

However, that night, we got a call from the hospital, saying that "Blobbie" had a rare brain malformation, and he was missing an important part of his brain. The subsequent week is a blur in my memory. We learned more about his condition, went to appointments with specialists for testing, and ultimately, consulted with genetic counselors to understand our options. He was unlikely to live to his full term, and we had the option to terminate the pregnancy. However, since some women would choose to carry the baby as long as possible, my physicians made it clear that the choice to intervene – and have an abortion – was mine to make. An early induction of labor would be the safest process, and frankly, I was grieving and did not want to stay pregnant when I knew I would lose my baby. Still, choosing to end a wanted pregnancy was incredibly difficult, and so deeply sad.

I was in the hospital for three days, much of that time waiting for labor to be triggered by the drugs I was given. We held our stillborn baby and said goodbye to him through our tears. We named him Robert – the long version of "Blobbie" – and later, let our daughter choose his middle name. He is Robert Brother to us. The following week, I was given medical leave from work, and cried for the whole week straight. Somehow I emerged, received counseling and support from family and friends, and we began to plan for another baby. Thankfully, I got pregnant again easily, though we were tentative the whole pregnancy. I had a fast, easy labor. Today I celebrated the fifth birthday of

my beloved youngest daughter, Julia, and my husband and I told her her birth story as we tucked her in.

I share these details because, while they are very sad to me, they would have been much less bearable if our insurance did not cover our hospital costs when we had our terrible loss. That may sound like exaggeration, and I did not even consider my good fortune at the time – I was able instead to focus my attention on grieving and caring for my family, as I should have. But if my husband and I had to pay for even a part of our hospital stay when I had an abortion, it would have created an immense financial hardship. If we had to pay out of pocket, we might not have opted to choose the safest procedure. I don't like to think how I might have felt waiting to lose Robert, with people smiling at my pregnant body and holding doors open for me, while I grieved privately. I also feel anxious imagining what it would have been like for my husband and me, weighing the emotional and health risks of continuing my pregnancy against the financial burden of a costly termination. And I am grateful that access to safe, quality medical care with Robert did not impair my ability to have a healthy pregnancy and labor with Julia.

Some friends and family members do not think that what we experienced was "abortion." Because I was married, had a planned pregnancy, had a child already – that my situation was different. However, I know from deep within that deciding to end a pregnancy is personal, and the reasons vary widely. My story is one of many. Through my healing, I was amazed at how many people I became connected to who had been through similar situations. Ending a pregnancy is painful enough. It is my plea that you respect the range of women's complex experiences and not increase their burden in a difficult time.

Respectfully,

Jenni Lane